

Drinking Water Assistance for Jackson, Mississippi

Updated Statement of Work Through Sept 2023

Environmental Finance Center at the School of Government at UNC-CH
in partnership with the U.S. Water Alliance

The Environmental Finance Center at UNC-Chapel Hill started work with Region 4 EPA staff and the City of Jackson, MS in late 2021 to provide technical assistance to the city. The original scope of work included a kick-off meeting, an assessment of the current situation, the development of alternative governance structures, the creation of funding scenarios to support capital needs, the facilitation of feedback sessions as city staff reviewed the deliverables, and a final project wrap-up meeting. To date, UNC EFC has:

- Completed financial analyses using the Affordability and Financial Health Check-up tools.
- Met with Jackson Public Works staff to review the outputs of the tools and discuss next steps (March 2022, also serving as a kick-off meeting).
- Conducted a series of interviews with Public Works staff and community members.

UNC EFC will provide a report summarizing the above work.

Since the development of the original scope, the situation in Jackson has changed considerably and UNC EFC engaged in regular conversations with the EPA to understand what support would be most beneficial to the city given the circumstances and limited data available. UNC EFC also connected with other stakeholders providing technical assistance to the city, namely the US Water Alliance. The previous scope of work included the development of potential alternative governance structures and funding scenarios. However, given the changing needs on the ground in Jackson, UNC EFC proposes to modify the previously agreed upon scope, namely eliminating the development of alternative governance structures and funding scenarios and adding the engagement of U.S. Water Alliance to leverage technical experts on the ground in Jackson better equipped to address the city's acute needs. Using the remaining funds available from the original \$150,000 plus an additional \$100,000 to engage the U.S. Water Alliance, UNC EFC proposes the following scope of work (dates: September 2022 – August 2023).

1. Technical On-site Support to Bridge Transition from Response to Recovery

New funds requested: \$29,000

September 2022 through February 2023

Jackson is lacking technical expertise in water treatment plant operations and management. Much of this has been provided by MEMA and MSDH and the Federal partners (EPA, ACOE, FEMA) during the initial response. As those resources draw down, Jackson needs additional support on the ground to assist with resourcing, troubleshooting, coordination, management, and compliance. US Water Alliance can leverage its network to provide such resources.

2. Rate Structure/Pricing Model

New funds requested: \$33,000

December 2022 through April 2023

Success in Jackson will only be achieved with a sustainable financial plan. With a history of struggles with metering, billing, and collection, a new rate structure may be required to get past this history and move forward with the entire community sharing the cost of safe and reliable water – equitably. Any solution needs to be affordable for all citizens of Jackson.

- a. On-site one week – Team of EFC, US Water Alliance (facilitation of meetings), and rate consultant Up to 6 people x \$2,000 = \$12,000 (Tentatively scheduled for the week of January 9, 2023)
 - i. Socialize equity-based rate concept with Jackson decision-makers
 - ii. Present concept, results of using Jackson data to individuals and groups
 - iii. Gather additional property information to complete analysis (missing parcel info, etc., from an assessor, maps, tax collector, and other sources on site)
- b. Technical research on legal limitations on the implementation of equity-based rate concept (January 2023 through April 2023)
 - i. Review local and state laws, regulations, and Attorney General opinions
 - ii. Review concept with Hinds County Tax Collector \$8,000

3. Equitable Work Distribution

New funds requested: \$38,000

January – May 2023

Over the next 12 months, significant Federal and State dollars will be invested in Jackson's water infrastructure. Traditionally, small minority contractors are challenged to compete for this type of work. The goal of this initiative is to ensure opportunities for all by understanding the capacity in the Jackson community and purposely packaging contracts to permit everyone to benefit from these investments.

- a. On-site minority contracting workshop – targeted for January 2023
- b. Engagement with community groups, faith community, and contracting community
- c. Two evenings of open meetings – in Jackson \$10,000 (Tentatively scheduled for the week of January 9, 2023)
- d. Ongoing minority business support – information line, advertisement, business consulting (contract with a local consultant to provide these services) \$30,000

4. Ongoing Support

New funds requested: \$0

Through August 2023

The team will continue to provide minor support if needed through August 2023 with remaining funding (if available).

UNC EFC intends to subaward the entire amount of new funds to the U.S. Water Alliance. UNC will not charge any indirect on these funds as USWA already has an established subaward. UNC EFC will use the existing remaining funds previously awarded to contribute to the above tasks.